

ON THE CD

TRACKS 41-42

41. Full track
42. Backing track



Behind the wild outfits, outlandish shows and wacky song titles, lay some of the '70s' wickedest funk guitar. Here's how they did it.

PLAY FUNK LIKE PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC

GT RATING MODERATE



Will improve your:

- Subdividing 16th-note rhythms
- Hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides
- Alternate picking

"As is often the case with funk, a unison bass and guitar riff can make a strong focal point to a song's arrangement."

YOUR GT TUTOR

■ JASON SIDWELL
See p9 for more info on all the GT tutors



Funkadelic: shy George Clinton (aka Cousin It) and mystery axe dude.

In soul, funk and R&B music there are several names that defined a style and set new standards for the music. James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Sly And The Family Stone, Earth Wind & Fire and Prince are just a few that have left their imprint on funk history, and to those names we can also add the name of George Clinton. The funk Svengali was a prolific artist from the late '60s through to the '80s, and he masterminded two huge and memorable funk bands – Parliament and Funkadelic.

FINGER-LICKIN' FUNK

Although each band's history is erratic (to say the least), Parliament's funk style was a little more singles-based, while Funkadelic embraced a more psychedelic rock-funk vibe that wasn't frightened to stretch out. Helping these two bands blossom were quite a few guitarists, including Clarence 'Fuzzy' Haskins, Gary 'Diaperman' Shider, Lucius 'Tawl' Ross, William Nelson, Catfish Collins (bass-thumping Bootsy Collins' brother)

GET THE FUNK UP FURTHER LISTENING



THIS IS A MINEFIELD as there's just so many albums and compilations. I've opted to list two studio albums and one compilation from each to give you an easy way into their repertoire. For Parliament try:

'Up For The Downstroke' (1974), starring the title track; 'Mothership Connection' (1976), featuring 'Give Up The Funk (Tear The Roof Off The Sucker)' and 'The Best Of Parliament: Give Up The Funk' (1995). For Funkadelic try: 'Maggot Brain' (1971), featuring the title track and 'Super Stupid'; 'One Nation Under A Groove' (1978) – 'Who Says A Funk Band Can't Play Rock?!' or 'The Very Best Of Funkadelic' (1998).

SOUND ADVICE

FUNKY HUMBUCKING

ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN numerous players in Parliament and Funkadelic, the majority of guitars used have been equipped with humbuckers. So in keeping, I broke with tradition for all my previous funk columns and recorded all seven licks here with a Seymour Duncan Pearly Gates bridge humbucker fitted to my Double Fat Strat. Although a bridge humbucker tone is a little unusual for the majority of funk guitarists (Nile Rodgers, Jimmy Nolan, Paul Jackson Jr etc) as it's quite piercing when played clean, I used it here to make the licks bolder and 'rockier'. Coupled with a compressor to even out the dynamics (and it calms high-end frequencies too!), I used a POD Pro set as follows:

Amp type	master	drive	bass	mid	treble	pres
Black Face	7	4	6	5	6	6

For those intrigued by the Bootsy Collins-style bass sound, it came from a Fender Precision plugged into an Electro Harmonix Doctor Q pedal.

and Eddie Hazel. All these players provided some truly memorable moments. The clean guitar parts on '70s Parliament songs alone are great, but for many it's the rock-inspired soloing and riffing of Eddie Hazel that is most memorable. In particular, many rate Eddie's playing on Funkadelic's 'Maggot Brain' as mind-fryingly good.

CLEAN PLAYING

That said, I've opted to (mostly) concentrate on clean guitar playing to give you a taste of the funk riffs that these two bands excelled at. So what follows are seven short riffs in the key of A major/A minor that are played with a relatively clean guitar sound. Feel free to use a bit of overdrive/distortion if you want a rockier tone.

For the eagle-eyed amongst you, my monthly key changing (so you're equipped to funk in all keys) has returned to A minor, which was the key that launched the first column on Nile Rodgers.

So have fun and see you next month for a change of scene with some Scottish-tinged funk! **GT**

EXAMPLE 1 BASS AND GUITAR UNISON RIFF

AS IS OFTEN THE CASE WITH HEAVY FUNK BANDS, a unison bass and guitar riff can make a strong focal point to a song's arrangement. Here, a bluesy A mixolydian riff (the notes in this mode are A B C# D E F# G with an additional minor 3rd, C) is

syncopated and clipped for a tight sound. Remember, a note's length is just as important as its starting point if you're looking to improve your funk playing – even more so here, considering you're doubling with the bass!

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$ **A7**

Funk

HOW TO FUNK LIKE PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC

EXAMPLE 2 SYNCOPATED MINOR PENTATONIC RIFF

USING LEGATO (HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS) amongst picked syncopated notes can add a new twist to a riff. Here the inclusion of several pull-offs and hammer-ons early on creates a

surprising synth-like style of phrasing. Spend time getting the timing spot on with this, otherwise it could sound like you've got your fingers in knots – not funky!

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$
Am7

EXAMPLE 3 OCTAVE-ACCENTED MINOR PENTATONIC RIFF

THIS IS FUN AS IT USES OCTAVES to fatten up specific notes. From a rhythmic point of view, the octaves in the first three bars move the emphasis from beat 1 to beat '2&' for a more interesting 'push and pull'

effect against the drums. Shifting accents like this is highly effective and a means to considerably up the 'sophisticated funk' factor. Listen to James Brown or Earth Wind & Fire for others that excel at this.

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$
Am7

**EXAMPLE 4 CLIPPED 16TH-NOTE RIFF**

HAVING HAD SEVERAL JAMES BROWN musicians among the ranks, it's inevitable that Parliament and Funkadelic featured a few JB-approved rhythms. Here the rhythm played by the first four 16th notes is pure JB, but played as single notes rather than chords. With this reference to mainstay funk, the riff ventures a little

outside the norm to feature a slightly ominous $\flat 2$ (**BAR 2's** $B\flat$ note) and a sliding hammer-on/pull-off lick in the third bar. I used fingers one and four, then slid up to use one and three to play this – but opt for whatever you're comfortable with as long as you get the required snaky results!

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^{\flat 2}$

Am7

1,3

EXAMPLE 5 LOW RIFF PLUS SYNCOPATED CHORDS

THIS TWO-BAR RIFF IS 'CALL AND RESPONSE' BASED – the low A blues scale riff is the 'call' and the high chords, the 'response'. Use slight palm muting on the single notes so they sound 'chunkier' and your fourth finger for the quick F#-G-F# slide within the implied D7

chord during **BAR 2's** beat 3. Attempt to aim, as with all the other examples, to use the picking directions notated under the tab, because this is the most logical way to keep you in time and sounding your best.

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^{\flat 2}$

Am7

slight PM

S S

(omit 4th time)

X4



EXAMPLE 6 SYNCOPATED CHORD RIFF

ALTHOUGH THE RHYTHMS HERE ARE PRETTY FUNKY, the two chord voicings of G and D are a small glimpse into the benefits of knowing chords on three strings all over the fretboard. When this is learnt to very high levels, you get into Wes Montgomery

chord/melody terrain – but as a funkster, even knowing, say, G in three voicings across the top three strings will greatly enhance your playing during a static G chord-based band groove. As always: spend the time, reap the rewards!

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^\flat$

Am7

1,3

G D

S

2,4

G D

Am7

S

EXAMPLE 7 8TH-NOTE ROCK UNISON RIFF

I COULDN'T FINISH THIS FEATURE WITHOUT paying a (very) small homage to the rockier side of Funkadelic. This Hendrix-like riff (especially the wide vibrato and quarter tone 'curl' on the minor

third) uses slides and slightly clipped note lengths to add attitude to the relentless 8th-note rhythm. I've suggested using all down strokes for consistent note velocity.

$\text{♩} = 106$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^\flat$

Am7

10 8 8 7

7 5 7 5 7

5 8 5 7 5 8

7 5 7 5 7 0